



# Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs

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Providing leadership and advocacy for the enhancement of our fish and wildlife resources for the benefit of all hunters, trappers, anglers and conservationists. Protecting our 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment Rights.

June 15, 2015

## Testimony regarding House Bills 223 and 366 Game & Fisheries Committee Pennsylvania House of Representatives

Good morning Chairman Gillespie, Chairman Harhai and members of the House Game and Fisheries Committee. I am John Kline, Director of Government Affairs for the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs. The Federation is one of the oldest and largest organizations in the commonwealth providing leadership and advocacy for the benefit of hunters, trappers, anglers and conservationists while vigilantly protecting our second amendment rights.

The Federation currently represents about 71, 000 members with over 200 clubs across the commonwealth. Our membership also includes organizations such as the Pennsylvania Trappers Association and United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bills 223 and 366 regarding the use of semi automatic rifles for hunting.

As I mentioned in previous testimony on other matters the Federation is a true "Grass Roots" organization. Positions advocated here in Harrisburg by the Federation are a result of direct input by individual members and member clubs casting votes on a wide variety of topics that affect the hunting, fishing, trapping and the conservation community.

My next statement will come as no surprise to you as legislators, and particularly as members of this committee. Hunters have a wide variety of opinions and they are not shy when making them known. Such is the case with House Bills 223 and 366.

Pennsylvania hunters are currently permitted to use semi-automatic arms for a variety of species. For example, semi-automatic shotguns are permitted while hunting small game, waterfowl, turkey, coyotes and deer in special regulation areas just name a few. Pennsylvania's prohibition on the use of semi-automatic rifles for hunting, however, remains in place and requires a change in statute for the Game Commission to properly regulate.

Let me say that, in general, the Federation has, and continues to support legislation that puts decision making into the hands of the regulatory agencies on matters of seasons, bag limits, licensing, equipment requirements and safety. House Bills 223 and 366 would expand the use of semi automatics to certain calibers (in the case of HB223) and magazine capacities (in the case of HB 366). Also, we know of no evidence that indicates that hunting with a semi-automatic rifle poses a greater safety risk or added opportunity for a hunter to act inappropriately.

In March of this year our delegates met in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania to discuss a number of topics. House bills 223 and 366 were on our agenda for consideration by our members. There was a lot of discussion and members made their positions known.

The Federation supports House Bill 223 which would allow the use of semi-automatic rifles, caliber .223 and less for hunting coyotes, foxes and ground hogs. We recognize that there are a number of rifles in this category that would be suitable hunting arms.

On House Bill 366, however, our delegates took a different position. Let me state publicly that the Federation recognizes that there is no stronger advocate for sportsmen and the exercise of our second amendment rights than the author and prime sponsor of HB 366.

Having said that, the Federation was not able to gather consensus to support 366 which would allow hunting with of semi-automatic rifles but with magazine restrictions.

Some of our members think that, perhaps an incremental approach might be better.

I also point out that even though HB 223 is fairly prescriptive, a number of our delegates voted no on both bills because both bills are too prescriptive. In other words, let the Game Commission decide what tools are appropriate for the task. After all, the legislature doesn't prescribe what kind of fishing equipment to use, that's up to the Fish and Boat Commission.

On behalf of the men and women who make up the membership of the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs I thank you again and stand ready for any questions.